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IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY FOR THE FIRST REGIONAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE ARAB STATES (1997-2001)

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INTRODUCTION

1. The first regional cooperation framework (RCF) for the Arab States (1997-2001) was approved by the Executive Board at its third regular session September 1997. It was based on a broad consultative process that culminated, at the beginning of 1997, in the endorsement by the Arab States of a draft outline of the regional programme. Its resources will be allocated among the following areas of concentration: (a) social and economic reform and multilateral economic cooperation; (b) micro-financing; (c) the sustainable provision and use of energy; (d) governance for social development, with an emphasis on poverty eradication; (e) food security; (f) building the capacity of the Arab workforce to participate in the information-based economy; and (g) the sustainable management of natural resources, with a special focus on water.

2. In its decision 97/9 of 14 March 1997, the Executive Board requested the Administrator to present to the Executive Board for its consideration and approval an implementation strategy paper for each individual regional cooperation programme. The present document responds to that request, indicating how the objectives of the first RCF for the Arab States will be achieved.

I. LESSONS OF PAST COOPERATION

3. The 1996 Office of Strategic Planning and Evaluation (OESP) evaluation, entitled Global, Interregional and Regional Programmes: An Evaluation of Impact, documents in its conclusions and recommendations the preoccupation with efficiency and sustainability that has been a prominent feature of regional evaluation efforts in the Arab States, such as in the evaluation of the second regional programme (1992); evaluations of all regional agricultural projects (1996); the assessment of sustainability and impact of results achieved by 16 regional projects (1996); an analysis of the mandatory regional projects evaluations; and the OESP/Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) evaluation of public sector management and reform projects in the Arab States (1996).

4. The feedback from these evaluations and assessments has constituted the most important input into the design of the RCF and its implementation strategy. They stressed in particular the need for: (a) financial and thematic focus to achieve greater impact of initiatives; (b) partnership- and ownership-building to achieve greater dynamic sustainability of results of the technical cooperation; (c) the importance of a demonstration/learning approach and networking in enhancing regional capacities to increase efficiency and effectiveness of activities; (d) subregional cooperation to achieve greater focus on areas of common interest; (e) linkages with global and country programmes to introduce greater coherence of UNDP operations and to strengthen their impact; (f) the application of a results-driven approach to programming and implementation to ensure a link between objectives and resources; and (g) adequate staffing of the management structure to secure accountability.

II. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY AND ARRANGEMENTS

5. The UNDP regional programme plays an important role in the development efforts in the region by providing a forum for: (a) the identification of a shared agenda for development cooperation among the Arab States; (b) the determination of sustainability factors for this cooperation; (c) the application of a demonstration/learning approach as well as bringing global development experience and resources into that approach; and (d) the establishment of regional networks to increase technical capacities. UNDP has proven to be capable of playing such a role in the Arab States region because of its neutrality and well-established relationships with programme beneficiaries.

A. Common elements in the design and implementation of the components of the regional programme

6. The implementation strategy incorporates the lessons learned from past cooperation and is devised to preserve, at the implementation stage the substantive focus and the intended impact of the RCF. Greater focus will be achieved by keeping the total number of active projects under 20 and by a thematic shift towards sustainable human development (SHD) and poverty eradication. The RCF will focus on institutions and systems that serve these goals and that need to increase their capacities in order to bring about the desired changes in a more efficient and effective way.

7. The concept of partnerships will be broadened to include not only financial alliances, but also to embrace developmental considerations. The creation of social capital is prominent at all stages of the programme and project process, as well as in the post-design, implementation phase. The modality of project design workshops and of yearly, participatory steering-committee-cum-tripartite review meetings to plan activities and expenditures and oversee project implementation is being implemented throughout the regional programme. This increases the regional ownership of the programme, as do broad consultations with all the stakeholders; effective execution and implementation, with special preference given to national execution and/or implementation; and social acceptability and general affordability of technical solutions.

8. All new initiatives will be based on a demonstration/learning approach, and communication will be given a prominent place in their design. This follows from positive experience in facilitating links between national and intergovernmental institutions through networks, and will enhance inter- and intraregional technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC).

9. Previous experience has brought to light positive examples of subregional cooperation. Stand-alone subregional initiatives and the clustering of interested countries in the framework of region-wide activities will be pursued during the period covered by the RCF. Every initiative will adopt as its operational priority the facilitation of access and provision of services to the region's least developed countries (i.e., Djibouti, Somalia, the Sudan, Yemen).

10. A shift that has occurred in the substantive focus of the global programme and in country cooperation frameworks will allow the RCF to establish linkages

with global subprogrammes and with country-level initiatives. The positive experience of forging links with country initiatives via simultaneous programming at the regional and country levels has been tested in the context of the Mediterranean Environment Technical Assistance Programme (METAP) and will be expanded under the present RCF.

11. The concern about adequate budgeting will be addressed by the shift to providing relatively small, high-quality inputs to large ongoing regional processes, and by piloting solutions or raising awareness about issues and solutions, with the goal of assembling partnerships around such initiatives, as catalysis for initiating large regional processes.

B. Implementation strategy for each thematic area of the regional programme

1. Social and economic reform and multilateral economic cooperation

Objectives

12. The objectives in this thematic area are to equip the Arab societies with additional capacity to shield themselves, and especially their poor populations, from the avoidable costs of the globalization of trade and capital markets, and to benefit from these global processes as well as from regional and interregional economic cooperation and trade. This will be achieved by the increased ability of the institutions responsible for introduction of social and economic changes to adjust to external challenges in a timely and effective manner. Towards this end, public, private and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will be provided with the information and skills needed for quick, effective responses to global and regional economic challenges and opportunities.

Modalities/instruments

13. The modalities and instruments by which the objectives in this thematic area will be achieved include: (a) coordination with the UNDP global subprogramme on emerging SHD issues; (b) coordination with the economic and social reform-related elements of governance initiatives in UNDP-supported national programmes; (c) the use of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)-managed mechanism for financing requests for technical assistance originating from individual countries; (d) the use of the UNOPS-managed mechanism for prioritizing by region the services offered by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the International Trade Centre (ITC); (e) the use of various mechanisms (meetings of beneficiaries, networking) for region-wide sharing of lessons learned; (f) the establishment of partnerships for the provision of technical services and co-financing with UNCTAD, ITC, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Intellectual Property Organization, the Arab Monetary Fund, the Arab Trade Financing Programme, the Foreign Investment Advisory Service, and the Islamic Development Bank; and (g) the use of UNOPS execution, with technical support from the United Nations

Department of Development Support and Management Services (DDSMS), while giving priority for implementation to national and regional institutions.

Expected results

14. The results expected in this thematic area include: (a) response to at least 20 country requests for urgent expertise in areas connected with their ongoing reforms in the social and economic sectors; (b) the establishment of a forum for intercountry exchange of experience from such technical interventions; (c) the implementation of a two-year programme of intensive training of trainers as well as in public and private institutions in subjects related to trade, especially under the WTO regime; (d) the introduction of trade points to at least 10 countries and converting this process into a region-wide learning experience; (e) the establishment of a fully operational Intra-Arab Trade Information Network, connected to public and private users in all Arab States; (f) the implementation of a two-year programme of training for those who work in public and private institutions in subjects related to enhancing private investments; and (g) the review and development of legislation related to the protection and administration of intellectual property and the provision of the necessary training in that area, first in three pilot countries, and subsequently, region-wide. Success will be measured by the ability of institutions in Arab countries to lower the cost of and/or to increase their gain from globalization as well as from regional and interregional cooperation.

2. Micro-financing

Objective

15. The objective in this thematic area is to provide the poor populations in urban and rural areas, especially women, with the capabilities needed to increase their profit from participation in the market, thus improving their standards of living and raising their share of contribution to the gross domestic products of their countries. Towards this end, the initiative will aim at improving the access of the poor to micro-financing provided by sustainable institutions that focus on servicing the poor populations, thus expanding opportunities for self-employment and other types of income-generating activities.

Modalities/instruments

16. The modalities and instruments by which the objective in this thematic area will be achieved include: (a) cooperation with UNDP-supported national programmes, to place micro-financing in the context of their poverty eradication and awareness-building initiatives; (b) cooperation with the global MicroStart initiative to gain access to its technology and to high-quality global providers of technical capacity for micro-credit operations; (c) the establishment of a capacity-building programme for national institutions (public, private financial, NGOs) in the pilot countries; (d) the establishment of a forum for joint learning among national institutions and all other organizations in the region that already are providers of micro-credit or are interested in starting

such operations; (e) direct UNDP or UNOPS execution; and (f) implementation by international NGOs, with intensive use of inter- and intraregional TCDC.

Expected results

17. The results expected in this thematic area include: (a) 15 to 20 sustainable national micro-finance intermediary institutions in three pilot countries; (b) direct extension of micro-credit and micro-savings to approximately 20,000 micro-borrowers, especially women in poor rural and urban areas; and (c) a forum for learning established among the MicroStart institutions and all other interested institutions in the Arab countries. The success of the initiative will be measured at one level by the number of institutions in the region with adequate capacity to run the micro-credit operations in a sustainable way and by the number of poor people who are directly affected. At another level, success will be measured by increased awareness in Arab societies about the many-faceted social and economic benefits of enlarging the access of the poor to credit and the policy changes that may be needed to make it happen.

3. Sustainable provision and use of energy

Objective

18. The objective in this thematic area is to equip the Arab societies with greater capacity to reduce the lack of access to reliable sources of energy as a barrier to economic growth and human development, with a special focus on poor, remote areas and women, through the effective management of the supply and demand side of the issue. Towards this end, the energy efficiency measures will be introduced into the operation of energy providers (power companies, providers of self-standing new and renewable sources of energy) and energy consumers (public and private businesses, household consumers, including those in remote, poor off-grid areas).

Modalities/instruments

19. The modalities and instruments by which the objective in this thematic area will be achieved include: (a) coordination with a UNDP global subprogramme that addresses the issue of access to energy for the poor; (b) coordination with the implementation of a Global Environment Facility (GEF)-financed capability-building project in the Maghreb to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; (c) cooperation with the E7 Network of Expertise for the Global Environment; the use of an implementation mechanism, executed by DDSMS, led by three convener countries for the cooperation of interested countries in the region (choice of activities, joint learning) in the three distinct areas covered by the initiative (i.e., demand management, supply management and new and renewable sources of energy).

Expected results

20. The results expected in this thematic area include: (a) sustainable energy service companies in at least five countries; (b) integrated resource planning in at least five countries; (c) the development of policies, skills and systems for commercialization of new and renewable sources of energy in all interested countries in the region; and (d) subregional learning mechanisms in place for all of the above-mentioned areas. Success will be measured by the actual implementation of piloted technical solutions and demand for energy-conservation services.

4. Governance for social development, with an emphasis on poverty eradication

Objective

21. The objective in this thematic area is to provide Arab societies with additional capacity for pro-poor strategy, policy and programme development and implementation by increasing their ability to effectively formulate pro-poor policies and programmes and enhancing the performance of institutions (public, private, civil society) that deal with services for social development and especially for poverty eradication. Towards this end, the initiative will create an expanded body of knowledge about the social issues in the region and the best ways to address them.

Modalities/instruments

22. The modalities and instruments by which the objective in this thematic area will be achieved include: (a) cooperation with governance initiatives in UNDP-supported programmes at the national level, by drawing on their databases and experience; (b) cooperation with the relevant subprogrammes of the UNDP global programme, e.g., in the areas of poverty monitoring, poverty strategies, gender analytical frameworks, gender-mainstreaming and management development; (c) reliance on the capacity of the first subregional resource facility in the region to address governance issues; (d) broad consultation within the region on priority issues in governance for social development and priority areas for technical cooperation; (e) gender-sensitive data collection and analysis, through national human development reports, the development of national strategies and policies, where appropriate, as follow-up to the already established main elements of a strategy to eradicate poverty in the Arab States, as well as portfolios of programmes and projects, and sharing information and skills about best practices related to serving the social needs of the populations, especially the poor; (f) the use and strengthening of the technical capacity of the Centre for Arab Women Training and Research (CAWTAR) and the networking capacity of regional social-sector institutions and organizations, including NGOs; (g) intensive use of inter- and intraregional TCDC; and (h) the uses of a mix of execution and implementation arrangements that will highlight national execution, in some cases, with the support of UNOPS, DDSMS and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

Expected results

23. The results expected in this thematic area include: (a) national statistics offices in seven countries with the capacity for the collection of gender-sensitive statistical data; (b) the production of national human development reports throughout the region, based on leading regional and global examples for data collection and analysis; (c) the establishment of a regional strategy for poverty prevention and eradication, with well-developed national and regional portfolios of projects aimed at poverty prevention and eradication; (d) the implementation of several pilot activities in areas related to social development (e.g., policy development, social safety nets, traditional anti-poverty institutions) for the purpose of region-wide learning; (e) increased region-wide awareness of priority issues in the area of social development; and (f) the strengthening of CAWTAR so that it has full capacity to collect data, research, train and network in the region. Success will be measured by changes in quality of the social strategies, policies and programmes and their impact on well-being of the population at large, especially the poor, and by the cost-efficiency of services provided by the social service institutions and the degree to which their beneficiaries are satisfied with their services.

5. Food security

Objective

24. The objective in this thematic area is to equip Arab societies with an increased capacity to devise and implement measures that can ensure food security at the family level, especially among poor populations, by helping to increase the inclusion of the issue of food security in state economic and social policies, to the extent that they regulate markets, investments and social safety nets, and to develop elements of a coherent system focused on making food available to all. Civil society will be mobilized to fill the gaps that may persist in any such system and to establish norms for state/civil society cooperation to achieve the goal of food security at the family level. Towards this end, the initiative will facilitate a region-wide effort to devise elements of such a system and will support such a cooperation.

Modalities/instruments

25. The modalities and instruments by which the objective in this thematic area will be achieved include: (a) cooperation with the UNDP global subprogramme that focuses on food for the poor; (b) cooperation with the anti-poverty initiatives contained in UNDP-supported country-level programmes; (c) the establishment of a network of the regional capacity (public, private, civil society, including the food-poor communities and families, with a special emphasis on women) to ensure food security; (d) the provision of a forum and technical support for a process of development of a regional food security strategy, piloting several technical solutions for region-wide learning; (e) the establishment of interregional cooperation with the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, in the context of the Horn of Africa food and environment initiatives; (f) cooperation with the League

of Arab States and its specialized organizations (e.g., the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), AFESD); and (g) the promotion of national execution with technical support from United Nations agencies, organizations, specialized funds and economic commissions.

Expected results

26. The results expected in this thematic area include: (a) the establishment of a participatory, country-specific and region-wide process of identifying elements of a multisectoral system to ensure food security at the family level; (b) the development of a broad partnership, involving representatives of the public and private sectors as well as civil society and donors, that will identify itself with the process of achieving region-wide food security and support it; (c) the development of a region-specific flexible, conceptual framework for food security; and (d) the implementation of several (to be identified) pilot operations that will test technical solutions relevant to a chosen number of elements of the food security system, for region-wide learning. Success of the initiative will be measured by the actual introduction by member States of comprehensive food security systems, and, in the long run, by the increased calorie intakes, especially within poor populations.

6. Building the capacity of the Arab workforce for the information-based economy

Objective

27. The objective in this thematic area is to bring about a change in development policies in the region that would open up for the Arab workforce many more employment opportunities in high-quality jobs that pay considerably above the poverty line, thereby raising the overall capabilities of the people and the wealth of Arab societies. This will be achieved by the establishment of new partnerships between the State, businesses, civil society leaders, the media and academia, which would focus on this goal and become instrumental in redirecting development policies and investments. Towards this end, the initiative will facilitate forging such partnerships and will improve access to information about the combined impact of globalization and the information revolution on prospects for economic growth and human development, as well as to the ways in which countries in other regions are successfully coping with this challenge.

Modalities/instruments

28. The modalities and instruments by which the objective in this thematic area will be achieved include: (a) cooperation with UNDP global subprogrammes on the technological implication for SHD and support to emerging SHD issues, so as to benefit from their experience with impact of globalization and new technologies on human development; (b) cooperation with congruent regional programmes in the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific and RBA; (c) based on advocacy efforts by UNDP resident representatives, raising awareness about the challenges of working in an information-based economy at the national levels; (d) based on efforts of RBAS and country offices, the establishment of a broad,

representative network of interested regional leaders, media and academia and their development partners within and outside the region, including United Nations agencies, economic commissions, international financial institutions, regional intergovernmental organizations, banks, regional bi- and multilateral financial institutions and donors; (e) the sharing of concepts and experience and the provision of discussion forums, including a regional forum at the highest policy-making level, expertise, and pilot-testing of relevant technical solutions, as well as the development of requirements for social adjustments to these solutions; and (f) the promotion of a mix of executing and implementing modalities that would combine the capacities of national institutions, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and UNOPS and adopt intraregional TCDC as the main executing and implementing modality.

Expected results

29. The results expected in this thematic area include: (a) the creation of at least 8 to 10 representative, national interest groups for review and debate of the issue and its implications in national contexts; (b) a regional, high-level conference; (c) increased awareness among policy makers about the importance of the issue and the establishment of country-specific and region-wide lobbies capable of effective advocacy; (d) piloting, for the sake of region-wide learning, several information technology-related solutions (e.g., distance learning, business via the Internet). Success will be measured by the degree to which the initiative has a positive impact on development policies and investments in the region.

7. Sustainable management of natural resources, with a special focus on water

Objective

30. The objective in this thematic area is to equip Arab societies with added capacity to use their natural resources in a sustainable way to achieve economic growth and human development. Partnerships will be promoted at the national, subregional and interregional levels for the efficient management of natural resources, especially water, in an environment of conducive policies, far-reaching cooperation agreements, well-designed projects and programmes and knowledgeable implementation institutions. Towards this end, the initiative will offer forums and mechanisms for building such partnerships and for providing them with the information and skills that are needed to choose policy options and conceive and implement programmes.

Modalities/instruments

31. The modalities and instruments by which the objective in this thematic area will be achieved include: (a) cooperation with the UNDP global subprogramme on water for the poor; (b) cooperation with natural resources management initiatives in UNDP-supported national programmes; (c) the building of shared responsibility and capacity for the protection of the ecosystems in the Mediterranean Basin; (d) the forging of development partnerships among the Nile River riparian countries; (e) the gathering of lessons learned, piloting

solutions and coordinating efforts in development and management of water resources; (f) extensive use of networking of regional capacities, including that developed in past UNDP projects; (g) the use of the capacity of the World Bank/the European Investment Bank/UNDP/Capacity 21 Regional Facility in Cairo; (h) the promotion of partnerships for METAP among the concerned Governments via national focal points, the private sector, municipalities, NGOs, the media, the World Bank, the European Investment Bank, the European Union, the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Capacity 21, the International Academy for the Environment, the Harvard Institute for International Development, the Blue Plan, Sustainable Business Associates and donors; (i) the promotion of partnerships for the Nile River Basin initiative among the Governments of the riparian countries, RBA and GEF; (j) the promotion of partnerships for the water initiative among the broadest possible host of partners, including public institutions, NGOs, businesses, communities, the World Bank, ESCWA, AOAD and other regional intergovernmental institutions, and donors; and (k) execution by UNOPS that allows for the choice and extensive use of national implementation.

Expected results

32. The results expected in this thematic area include: (a) in the Mediterranean, countries supported in the development of projects for capacity development in the area of environment protection, policy makers and middle-level managers trained in environmental policy development and implementation, communication and conflict resolution, networks (e.g., among coastal cities, eco-journalists, policy makers, water authorities) supported in their activities, indicators and milestones developed for the assessment of impact of eco-policies, programmes and projects, and start-up of public-private partnerships for eco-protection; (b) in the Nile river basin, agreement on a cooperative framework among the Nile riparian countries; (c) a clearing house for water initiatives in the region, with several technical solutions piloted for the sake of region-wide learning. Success will be measured by the availability, in terms of quantity and quality, of water, the introduction and effective implementation of water management and pollution control policies; and social capital built around these issues, including intergovernmental development cooperation agreements.

III. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

33. The responsibility for management of a major part of the regional programme was delegated to the principal project resident representatives (PPRRs) in the region in November 1994. This process will have been completed by the end of 1997. Thus, the management structure of the regional programme will be based on the capacity of the offices of the PPRRs, each of which will be strengthened by two local national officers. The staff at headquarters who address regional issues (two professional and two support staff members) will have among their responsibilities the development of regional programmes and projects; the provision of substantive support to management of the regional programme; and management of the programme's financial resources.

34. RBAS is in the process of upgrading its system for monitoring the progress of implementation and for assessing the impact of the regional programme. Monitoring delivery will become part of the bureau-wide reporting and monitoring system. Monitoring performance will become part of the responsibilities of the PPRRs, on the basis of performance indicators contained in work plans, within a framework of periodic reviews, including yearly tripartite reviews. Monitoring impact will become a joint responsibility of the PPRRs and headquarters staff, on the basis of indicators established at the time of programme design. This will involve, inter alia, establishing a matrix for collecting relevant data on delivery, performance and impact of regional projects against pre-determined benchmarks. The matrix will be accessible for review and update via the Internet.

35. Programme evaluation will remain within the framework of the prevailing UNDP evaluation procedures and instruments. Additional funds will be made available to allow the high-quality application of these procedures and instruments. The RCF will be subject to a triennial review, which will take place during the third year of its operation, i.e., 1999. All regional programmes will be evaluated upon their completion. The issues to be addressed as well as the timing will be determined by the Programme Management Oversight Committee in consultation with the regional bureaux and the Evaluation Office.

IV. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION

36. The Executive Board may wish to:

Approve the implementation strategy for the first regional cooperation framework for the Arab States as contained in document DP/1997/7.

Annex

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND ALLOCATION TARGET TABLE
FOR THE ARAB STATES (1997-2001)

(In thousands of United States dollars)

Regional cooperation framework programme areas	Resource Allocation	
	Core	Non-core
1. Social and economic reform and multilateral economic cooperation	5 500	1 200 (AFTP, IDB)
2. Micro-financing	2 500	2 000 (AGFUND)
3. Sustainable provision and use of energy	1 500	3 000 (AFESD)
4. Governance for social development, with an emphasis on poverty eradication	9 000	-
5. Food security	4 262	-
6. Building the capacity of the Arab workforce for the information-based economy	3 500	-
7. Sustainable management of natural resources, with a special focus on water	7 000	14 000 (GEF, World Bank, Capacity 21, EC, AFESD)
TOTAL	33 262	20 200

Abbreviations: AFESD = Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development; AGFUND = Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations; AFTP = Arab Trade Financing Programme; EC = European Commission; IDB = Islamic Development Bank; GEF = Global Environmental Facility; and CAP = Capacity 21.